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SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR: DS/IP/AF, DS, IP/ITA, AF/E, AND CA/OCS/ACS
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: CASC ASEC PTER ET

SUBJECT: EMERGENCY ACTION COMMITTEE ASSESSES SECURITY AFTER
EXPLOSIONS AT TWO ADDIS ABABA COMMERCIAL FUEL STATIONS.

¶12. (U) On April 15, 2008 Post's Emergency Action Committee (EAC) met to assess the security situation after explosions occurring at approximately 1835 hours on the evening of April 14, 2008 at two commercial fuel stations in Addis Ababa. EAC members present included: ORA, DAO, CJTF-HOA, POL/ECON, USAID, CDC, CONS, GSO, Peace Corps, Health Unit, MGT, PAS, MSG, CJTF HOA, USAU, OBO SSM, SAO, PDT MIST and RSO. The Ambassador was attending an event outside Addis Ababa. The DCM was out of the country.

¶13. (U) The RSO briefed the EAC regarding the situation. Information available to date suggests that during the evening rush hour period at approximately 1835 hours on 04/14/2008 an explosion was reported to have occurred at a commercial fuel station. Preliminary reports indicated one explosion had occurred, the result of an accident. It was later reported that a second explosion had occurred at a second commercial fuel station belonging to the same Ethiopian government affiliated chain. Initially it was assessed the explosions were near simultaneous. The general consensus of the EAC, including members who heard both explosions, is ten or more minutes elapsed between the first and second explosion, and both incidents were the result of intentional acts. The two fuel stations are located approximately five minutes driving time from each other.

¶14. (U) The above explosions are reported to have resulted in three civilians killed and 16 to 19 injured (No further information). Both of these explosions were reported to have occurred at the kerosene pumps located at each of the commercial fuel stations. The host country government has not yet issued a statement regarding the explosions at this time and Ethiopian news sources have not run this story.

¶15. (U) The EAC assesses both of these incidents the result of an intentional act committed by unknown persons for unknown reasons. The EAC agreed that the fact that the incidents occurred at the kerosene pumps indicates the perpetrators were primarily motivated to target local civilians or to dissuade civilians from patronizing the Ethiopian government affiliated fuel outlet. Kerosene is primarily used by local civilians for cooking and heating purposes. It is not uncommon to see lines of local civilians at the kerosene pumps making purchases in small quantities. Based on this assessment, the EAC did not believe this incident was targeting western or U.S. interests.

¶16. (U) On 04/15/08 RSO Addis Ababa visited the two commercial fuel stations and observed the damaged kerosene pumps. Both pumps were completely destroyed. There were also black scorch marks on the adjacent perimeter walls. No other damage was noted at either of the locations. Sources advise one persons of interest has been detained by the police for questioning, a fuel pump technician who had recently serviced both of the kerosene pumps.

¶17. (U) The EAC deemed it prudent to take the necessary action:

¶1A. Encourage all mission personnel to monitor the Embassy's two way

radio network. In the event of a developing security situation the radio network will serve as the primary means to alert the Embassy community in a quick and reliable means as the cell phone network is time consuming (there is no mass text messaging capability in country) and could be unavailable due to technical limitations and other restrictions. The large size of the Mission would also make it difficult to reasonably alert personnel regarding a situation of interest in a timely manner;

¶B. Avoid large public venues with poor security and access control measures;

¶C. Continue to vary times, routes and places frequented;

D Vary the times when the Embassy's official vehicles refuel at a commercial fuel station where the USG has an account. (COMMENT: This fuel station is not the same chain as those targeted. END COMMENT)

¶D. Work with the Department to release a consular message advising American citizens regarding the incident and reminding them regarding the current security advisories in effect for Ethiopia and throughout the region;

¶8. (U) Post will continue to monitor this situation and report developments accordingly.

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